the fruits of experience be rendered back to the forces of evil and corruption. Knowledge can be had in this kingdom of woe only through a violation of nature; the source of experience is sin even as the source of innocence is sloth. It is almost as if Maisie 'sees' by the loss of light, and 'knows' by the loss of vision.

In *What Maisie Knew,* Henry James subjects the idea of refinement to a double ordeal of the human consciousness. First, the power of the world to destroy the potentiality of refinement in a consciousness which is just opening out to the impressions of the outside universe is dramatised in the steady onslaught of society on the virgin innocence of Maisie. Secondly, the helplessness of unprotected innocence, and its lack of power to extend the latent possibilities of refinement in its own consciousness into" the world of others, is dramatised in the gradual hardening of the moral sinew in an evolving personality as Maisie's. The unrefined world defies the refined individual; the individual who has suffered a deprivation of refinement extends the se if -corrupting process Into the world awaiting its refinement. The tragedy of Maisie is that the world as metaphor has usurped the reality of her consciousness, which in reaction becomes so paralysed that it seeks to enmesh the world into its own complex illusions, unbuttressed by any wholesome values except those that are anchored in a too, too limited selfhood. The cryptic response of the world to the individual's demand for refinement begs the question by conferring a favour that turns out to be a burden, and a gain that is in fact a toss.

In *The Awkward Age,* the momentum of the Jamesian sensibility launches the human consciousness into yet more tristful regions of human paradox aid ambivalence. In a society lacking in refinement, selfhood degenerates Into selfishness, morality into depravity; and values are sacrificed for individual whims and fancies. For the perceptive/ sensitive and refined consciousness, the retention of the

moral sense in an immoral world becomes an ordeal. James dramatises this ordea! of refinement in *The Awkward Age.*

In *The Awkward Age,* Henry James dramatises the maturing and refining of the self through a knowledge of good and evil. The ordea! of Nanda Brookenham lies in her struggle to retain her moral integrity in the face of the generic villainy of a corrupt and corrupting world, Nanda's refinement consists in her achieving a consciousness